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ABSTRACT

One critical area of concern for governments of small states is the provision and administration of examinations at the end of the secondary school cycle. The problems, faced by all states, of assuring that assessment and certification are carried out fairly, are compounded for small states by the additional difficulties associated with their limited human and financial resources. A pan-Commonwealth workshop on Examinations in Small States was held to bring together key actors in the field from public and private sectors. Deliberations of the workshop focused on issues such as personnel and infrastructure for the delivery of examinations, international recognition and national priorities, innovative ways of testing, and the use of technology in the administration of examinations. There were 62 participants from 25 countries, most of whom represented the examination departments of ministries of education, and many of whom came from member states of the British Commonwealth. With respect to examinations at the end of the secondary cycle, small states use one or a combination of three models: national examinations, regional examinations, or examinations prepared in larger countries. This report on the Workshop is divided into the following sections: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Conceptual Framework"; (3) "Country Presentations"; (4) "Regional Examination Systems"; (5) "Technical Issues"; (6) "School Based Assessment"; (7) "Security Issues"; (8) "Recognition of Qualifications"; (9) "Developing a Credit System"; and (10) "Conclusion." The issues and concerns raised were quite similar in most countries. Equity issues were a concern for most, as were questions of credibility, cost effectiveness, logistics, and confidentiality. Five appendixes list sponsors, present the program and a description of the Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies, and contain a workshop evaluation form. (SLD)

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Examination Systems in Small States

Pan-Commonwealth Workshop

Bridgetown, Barbados
6–10 May 1996

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Workshop Report
Commonwealth Secretariat

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EXAMINATION SYSTEMS IN SMALL STATES

Pan-Commonwealth Workshop
Bridgetown, Barbados
6-10 May 1996

Report by Human Resource Development Division
Commonwealth Secretariat

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Secondary education constitutes the bridge between the school and adult life for the vast majority of the school age population. It is concerned not only with providing an agreed core of education for all as a basis for living but also with ensuring a sound foundation for entry into the market place as well as for continuing education. Its significance in providing the tools for adult living is therefore without question. ***What is of critical importance is that on completion of this phase of their schooling graduates of secondary schools should be able to provide evidence of the competencies acquired.***

(White Paper on Education Reform
Preparing for the Twenty-First Century
Ministry of Education, Youth affairs and Culture,
Barbados, July 1995)

PREFACE

Small states are faced with challenges of scale in many fields as they strive to achieve human resource development. One critical area of concern is the provision and administration of examinations at the end of the secondary school cycle. The problems, which are faced by all states, of ensuring that assessment and certification are carried out by methods that are relevant, efficient, economical and fair, are compounded for small states by additional difficulties that are inherent in their limited human and financial resources.

Within the framework of the Commonwealth Secretariat's activities to assist in human resource development in small states, the need was identified to address these problems in examination systems through convening a workshop that would bring together key actors in the field from the public and private sectors. The deliberations of the workshop focused on issues such as personnel and infrastructure for the delivery of examinations, international recognition and national priorities, innovative ways of testing and the use of technology in the administration of examinations. The rich and intense deliberations reflect the interest and commitment of the many participants who represented ministries of education, examination boards, international and regional agencies and the private sector. The Secretariat wishes to thank all the participants for contributing to a successful workshop and looks forward to the continued assistance of all in the follow-up activities of this workshop.

The Secretariat is also grateful for the assistance received from the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture in Barbados and to the Honourable Minister for her message, which put to participants some challenges for testing and measurement. Special thanks to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate for the assistance in conceptualising and financing the workshop. We wish to express our appreciation also to the ministries of education represented; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand; UNESCO, South Pacific; UNICEF, Bhutan; Data and Research Services plc; Hamlet Computer Group Limited and Stephen Austin and Sons Limited for assistance provided. This workshop was an excellent example of partnership between government bodies and the private sector.

One of the major outcomes of the workshop is the proposal for the formation of an Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies and the Secretariat looks forward to the assistance of all participants in implementing the proposal. It is hoped that the Association will hold its first meeting at the next workshop which will be hosted by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority in Auckland in 1998.

Professor Stephen A Matlin
Director
Human Resource Development Division

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

A pan-Commonwealth workshop on Examination Systems in Small States took place at the Caribbee Hotel, Barbados from 6-10 May 1996. The Workshop was convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat and hosted by the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture and the Caribbean Examinations Council.

The workshop dealt with issues and concerns in the provision of examinations and focused on the unique situation of small states and the challenges that they face in providing a full range of educational services with limited human, financial and other resources.

With respect to examinations especially at the end of the secondary cycle, small states use one or a combination of three models. There are national examinations in many countries. Regional Examination Councils exist in the Caribbean, the South Pacific and West Africa. In addition, some countries use the examinations prepared by Examination Boards in developed countries.

Participants

There were 62 participants from 25 countries. The participants were mainly from the examination departments of ministries of education. Four major examination boards Caribbean Examinations Council, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, The South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate were represented. Representatives of three UK Companies involved in business related to the administration of examinations also attended. The Caribbean Community Secretariat, The Commonwealth of Learning, The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat and UNESCO, South Pacific were also represented. A list of participants is given in appendix 1

Sponsorship

The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, Barbados provided substantial support for the workshop. Assistance was also received from the ministries of education represented, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand, UNESCO, South Pacific, UNICEF, Bhutan and 3 UK private companies. A list of sponsors is given in Appendix 2.

Opening Ceremony

The workshop started with an opening ceremony which was chaired by Ms Lolita Applewhaite, Permanent

We can no longer continue to recognise only those who are doing well academically. You cannot talk about human development in any region without understanding that unless the system finds a way of being able to assess the levels of persons within the system, there is going to be a wastage of resources

Hon Mia Amor Motley, Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, Barbados1996

Secretary. Mr Ralph Boyce, Chief Education Officer welcomed participants and expressed delight at the opportunity afforded by the workshop for persons from the Caribbean region to meet with colleagues from various parts of the Commonwealth to examine issues and concerns in the preparation and administration of examinations. Ms Irene Walter, Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) also welcomed participants. She spoke of some of the challenges that CXC faces as a regional examining body and welcomed the opportunity to share the Caribbean experience and to learn from other examining bodies represented at the workshop. She also used the opportunity to announce the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination which will replace the traditional advanced level Examination set by UK examination bodies. She noted that the current examinations served a very narrow population and was intended to be the matriculation requirements for entry into a three-year university programme.

The new Caribbean examination will be targeted to a wider population. It will include those students who will be entering University and also those who are going into other professional areas. There will be two units each of 120 contact hours. Each unit will comprise modules. Students will be able to take a core programme and optional modules according to requirements for further education or the work place.

Professor Stephen Matlin, Director of the Human Resource Development Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat welcomed participants on behalf of the Secretariat.

Small states are faced with the challenge of not only providing quality education but also of ensuring that the graduates of the school system are appropriately certified and that the certification has currency both locally and internationally. The issues that may be relevant to small states have to do with:

- ***the structure at ministries for the administration of examinations - how can a small ministry provide the full range of services for administering examinations;***
- ***personnel with specialised training and how this can be achieved in situations where education officials have multiple functions;***
- ***security which is another concern in a small country where everybody knows everyone else; and,***
- ***another important consideration which is the cost of administering examinations.***

Professor Stephen Matlin, Director
Human Resource Development Division
Commonwealth Secretariat 1996.

He informed participants of the importance that the Secretariat gives to human resource development (HRD) and especially to assisting small states of the Commonwealth to develop and strengthen capability to achieve HRD given the challenges of scale. He outlined the purpose and expected outcomes of the workshop. He also noted that participants will benefit from first hand experience of the education system and modes of assessment during visits to schools in Barbados. He observed that many lessons can be learnt from the Caribbean region and cited as an example of a success story, the performance of girls in formal education.

The Honourable Mia Amor Motley, Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture gave the feature address. She too welcomed participants to Barbados and said how pleased her Ministry was to host this pan-Commonwealth event. She noted that education systems in general tended to recognise only those who do well in academic areas. She lamented the wastage that takes place through an inability of schools and examination bodies to test knowledge and skills in non traditional areas - which are also necessary for human development. Present examinations, she observed, catered for the top 30 or 40 per cent of the student population. The problem of what the other students can do after leaving school with no certification is becoming critical in a highly competitive environment. She also observed that various forms of testing are necessary since some students do not perform well on written examinations. In this regard, she challenged workshop participants to identify mechanisms that are capable of testing a wide range of competencies and that can also be used in out of school situations, for example, in adult literacy and extra-curricula programmes. She wished participants a successful workshop in this very important area of examinations and assessment.

Programme (Appendix 3)

Dr Mark Bray, University of Hong Kong and Dr Lucy Steward presented the conceptual framework and explained the procedures for the workshop. The deliberations took place in plenary and group sessions. At the plenary session a panel or lead presenter introduced and elaborated the topic under discussion and participants were allowed time for comments and questions.

Group sessions allowed participants to explore further the issues identified in plenary and presented in country papers. As part of the workshop activities participants visited selected schools in Bridgetown and the headquarters of CXC.

At the schools, participants met staff and students, shared with them information on the workshop and discussed issues and concerns of assessment. At the headquarters of CXC, participants met staff and observed the operations of CXC and the way the Council handles the various stages of preparing and administering examinations.

The deliberations of the workshop were synthesised in group sessions. The groups also formulated recommendations which were endorsed at the plenary session on the final day.

An evaluation of the workshop was done through the use of a questionnaire which participants completed on the final day.

A daily newsletter was prepared by an editorial team comprising Edna Tait (UNESCO, South Pacific), Mike Murtagh (NZQA), Ian Johnston (SPBEA), and Ibrahim Waheed (Maldives).

Organisation

A Chairperson was selected for each day's proceedings. Chairpersons were as follows:

Day 1 - Ms Lolita Applewhaite, Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, Barbados

Day 2 - Dr Dennis Irvine, Coordinator of Programmes
Caribbean Commonwealth of Learning

Day 3 - Dr S.Bissoondoyal, Director
Mauritius Examinations Syndicate

Day 4 - Ms Dolly Chong, Deputy Director (Examinations)
Ministry of Education, Singapore

Day 5 - Professor Roy Augier, Chairperson, Caribbean Examinations Council, Barbados

In the group sessions, each group selected a chairperson and rapporteur.

SECTION 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dr Mark Bray made a presentation on the ecologies of small states which provided a conceptual framework for discussing educational issues and concerns that are peculiar to countries with small populations.

Countries with a population of approximately 1.5 million and under are classified as small states. Dr Bray explained that, in general, four factors given below should be considered in dealing with small states:

(i) economic

-small size of the economy
-open and dependent on other economies
-small pool of manpower

(ii) Social

-everyone knows everyone else
-there is need for managed efficiency
-cultural vulnerability

(iii) Political

-leaders are much more accessible
-national identity is important
-regional cooperation is also necessary

(iv) Education

-need for national relevance and international recognition.

With respect to examinations, Dr Bray pointed out that the workshop may wish to consider issues such as personnel constraints, the need for national identity and cultural relevance and at the same time ensuring international acceptance and recognition, and, the need for neutrality and confidentiality in a society that is highly personalised. He outlined the three examination models in use by small states giving the advantages and disadvantages.

Given the vast amount of resources invested in the education of the nation's children and considering that persons without the evidence of an independent measure of their scholastic achievements are at a definite disadvantage in the adult world, it is vitally necessary that the country should provide an appropriate system of certification for a greater number of secondary school graduates.

(White Paper on Educaiton Reform
Preparing for the Twenty-First Century
Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture
Barbados, July 1995)

(a) National Examination

The most obvious advantage of national examination systems is that they can be sensitive to the societies that they serve. Examinations can be tailored to fit local syllabuses in a way that is difficult for regional bodies. Also, the national governments may have more control than they would over external examination bodies. However, examination boards face challenges that include the following:

(i) manpower - in countries with small populations, human resources are scarce and it is difficult to recruit enough people with the required technical skills;

(ii) lack of economies of scale - to some extent examination officers in small states have to perform the same tasks as their counterparts in larger states and this could result in high unit costs.

(iii)status and recognition of qualifications - small, local examination boards may encounter difficulties in securing wide recognition of qualifications.

(b) Regional Examinations

Two regions - the Caribbean and the south Pacific - have substantial clusters of small states which have joined to form important regional bodies. The Caribbean Examinations Council was established in 1972 and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) was created in 1980. The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) established in 1951 serves one small state - The Gambia - together with the larger states of Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Some advantages of regional examination bodies are:

(i) they can achieve economies of scale which would be more difficult at national level;
(ii) regional examinations can have greater weight and marketability;

(iii) regional examination can help in localisation and breaking outdated colonial ties.

(c) External Examination Boards

Small states continue to use examinations set in former colonial powers. For example, Botswana and the Bahamas are still served by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The University of London, City and Guilds London and Examination boards in Australia and New Zealand also serve some of the small states of the Commonwealth.

In most cases, the examinations are tailored to meet country requirements. This permits the clients to gain not only the prestige, expertise, recognition and perceived impartiality of the external body, but also at least some local relevance. However, the reliance on an external body may also raise questions of political dependency.
Financial costs can also be considerable.

SECTION 3

COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS

The country papers were presented in group sessions. There was great similarity in the issues and concerns identified, a summary of which is given below.

(i) Education philosophy underpinning examinations

It was important to ask questions related to the educational principles and values in establishing examination systems and to rationalise at what stage testing should take place and for what purpose.

Several countries reported changes in the reasons for doing examinations. As access to secondary and tertiary education widens, there is less need to select, rank and exclude pupils. Thus, there is shift from selection type examinations to those (for example, criterion referenced and school-based assessment) that give information about students strengths and potential.

There are attempts in many countries to provide a variety of examinations that will allow more students on leaving school to get a certificate that will enable them to continue their education or skills training at the workplace.

Equity issues were raised in terms of access of students to quality education since this has a direct bearing on examination outcomes. Issues of class, gender and ethnicity have to be considered in the formation of examination policies. Some countries mentioned the strategy of zoning students for secondary schools in order to improve access.

The objectives of the Mauritius Examinaiton syndicate (MES) as given in the MES Act 1984 are:

(i) ***To organise and conduct such examinations as may be directed by the Minister,***

(ii) ***To engage in relevant research and other related activities tending to promote the development of a sound system of examinations,***

(iii) ***To award certificates, and***

iv) ***To cooperate with other examinaiton bodies.***

(Mauritius Country Paper Barbados 1996)

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(ii) Examination structure

In most of the small states, a Department or division in the ministry is given the responsibility for administration of examinations.
In some of the countries, for example in Mauritius, a relatively autonomous body has been established while in a few countries the University working in collaboration with the ministry of education administers examinations.

(iii) Models

All countries use one or a combination of three models: national examinations; regional examinations; and, international examinations.

The nationalisation of examinations gives countries autonomy but makes heavy demands of personnel and costs.
Regionalisation provides small states with opportunities and possibilities available to economies of scale.

Some countries use external 'foreign' examinations such as those set by UCLES.

Some interesting partnerships have been developed between national examination systems and metropolitan bodies which provide a range of services such as paper setting, printing, marking, moderating and accrediting national certificates. The partnership between the Bahamas and UCLES was cited as an example of a working arrangement which enables Bahamas to meet local needs and also benefit from expertise at UCLES.

(iv) Personnel for Examinations

Most countries reported a lack of enough persons qualified in measurement and assessment. The situation is exacerbated by a high turnover rate in examination departments, few opportunities for professional development, and flat organisational structures that can frustrate capable and ambitious professionals. In the Caribbean and the South Pacific, the regional examination bodies have been providing training through workshops to help develop capability at local level in preparing and administering examinations.

An alternative to cut costs on examination services would be to grant schools or districts autonomy to conduct their school level or district level examinations. This alternative might seem cheap in financial terms in the short run but the costs in terms of quality of education would be very expensive in the long run to compensate for with any amount of money. Besides, the money that each school or district might spend under such situations might exceed the budget used by one agency due to economy of scale.

**(Bhutan Country Paper
Barbados 1996)**

(v) Confidentiality

In small states where everyone knows everyone else confidentiality and security are serious concerns. Most of the countries reported that even the social life of those involved in setting examinations was affected.

Several strategies to achieve confidentiality were mentioned. These included decentralising and shifting responsibility to officials at district levels, printing papers outside the country; preparing parallel papers and getting students to serve as witnesses to the breaking of seals in the examination room.

(vi) Logistics

Concerns mentioned included the lack of adequate centres for examinations, lack of sufficient clerical support and insufficient hardware. These logistical problems are more severe in the case of archipelagos where examination papers have to be sent to far-flung islands. The logistical difficulties sometimes delay the release of examination results and this can result in problems for students who are seeking entry into institutions for further education.

(vii) Credibility

While countries recognised the value of having national examinations that were relevant and free of cultural bias they were also concerned about the recognition of national certificates outside the country. Because of this concern, many countries were buying the services of international bodies which accredited the local certificates.

Other strategies used include cross checking student performance in selected subjects in local and regional/international examinations and statistical scaling/moderation to establish benchmarks in order to assess reliability of teachers' marks for school-based assessment.

(viii) Cost

All countries reported difficulties in assessing costs of administering examinations. Participants agreed that it would be useful to find out approximately what percentage of the education budget is allocated to the preparation and administration of examinations.

The examination system uses examining instruments that evaluate levels of attainment and other proficiencies relative to set objectives, bodies of knowledge, skills and competencies all defined by the curriculum and rooted in selected texts.

This creates a strongly examination driven environment which puts great stress on parents, teachers and students and greatly influences instructional practices and how people learn. Unfortunately too frequently, educational gains tend to be merely in terms of certification instead of development of the total human resource.

(Trinidad and Tobago Country Paper Barbados, 1996)

(ix) Curriculum

Most examination bodies are involved in curricular activities. CXC has invested significantly in the preparation of syllabi for subjects taught at secondary level in Caribbean schools. The participation of teachers in curricular activities (including examinations) was considered to be vital to ensure acceptance, ownership and relevance.

SECTION 4

REGIONAL EXAMINATION SYSTEMS

Representatives of the two regional bodies made presentations on the way these bodies operated. The representative of Botswana informed participants of attempts made at establishing a Council through regional cooperation among four countries in Southern Africa. A summary of the presentations is given below.

Caribbean Examinations Council

The decision to establish CXC was political. It was initiated by the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and came at a time when there was an attempt to increase relations among countries through a Federation. The willingness of governments to explore functional federation enabled the idea of a regional examination to be put on the agenda of governments of the region. Although Dr Eric Williams, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago was not the only one of his generation who had expressed publicly opinions about the effects of overseas school-leaving examinations on what was taught in the secondary schools, he had examined its cultural consequences systematically while he had been a Professor of history at Havard and published an essay which took account of the cultures of the people of the Caribbean.

Functional cooperation was the context, but there were also pedagogical reasons which made the time opportune. Firstly, all governments had adopted the policy of increasing the number of students in the secondary schools. By then the consequences of extending the range of abilities in the schools, yet examining all of them by tests which were effectively for selecting those who could go to Universities were evident.

There are five distinct elements in New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) pursuit of quality:

(i) registration of private training establishments (or approval of Government Training Establishment);

(ii) unit registration (setting the standards);

(iii) accreditation (ensuring that the provider has the capacity to deliver the standards);

(iv) moderation (ensuring that the standards have been delivered and that they are consistent between providers);

(v) audit (an independent evaluation of the whole system).

(NZQA Paper
Barbados, 1996)

The result was a long tail of failures. A similar situation was taking place in Britain and the GCSE was introduced there. Secondly, teachers had been exchanging ideas about the Cambridge syllabuses for their subjects and in some cases suggested changes had been accepted.

After several regional meetings governments agreed the establishment of the Caribbean Examinations Council. The agreement was signed by 1972 and in 1973 the first Council met in Barbados. The first Registrar was appointed in 1974.

In order to cater for a wide range of abilities, CXC proposed examinations at two levels - general and basic proficiency. The directive to integrate technical and vocational education with the academic subjects led to the provision of a technical proficiency. One of the philosophical plancks on which CXC is based is the school-based assessment which is carried out in most of the subject areas.

The change from the UCLES type examinations to the new examinations by CXC required extensive consultations.

The introduction of a basic proficiency was a novel idea. The intention was and still is to enable students to take a mix of subjects and get a broad-based education. So, for example, a student who wants to continue education in science, may take Chemistry, Physics and Biology at the General Proficiency Level but may also take History at the Basic Level. Further, the basic level proficiency was considered to be adequate for certain types of jobs and for some positions in the public service. For a number of reasons including the high competition for jobs in the region the basic level proficiency does not have the status intended. It is interesting to note that countries in the region are concerned that many students at the secondary level are unable to perform well in the CXC examinations - general and basic and are now offering or developing national examinations.

CXC employs an extensive consultative process in all its activities. Teachers are involved in syllabus formulation and review. They participate in training activities, provide feedback to CXC and mark scripts at centres in various islands.

CXC faced the challenge in the early phase of operation of ensuring high standards and negotiating recognition of qualifications by institutions mainly in the UK and USA. The Council is now well established.

The Caribbean Examinations Council has developed an examination culture among teachers who participate in marking scripts, designing syllabuses and item writing.

The testing of new syllabuses has provided an opportunity for staff development and the general improvement at the school level. CXC has created a name for itself all over the world and one of its advantages lies in the fact that it utilizes indigenous texts written by participating teachers in the system.

(Barbados Country Paper
Barbados, 1996)

It is currently involved in the development of a modular type examination to replace the Advanced Level Examination. In its work it has drawn from other parts of the Commonwealth and it can also offer services to Commonwealth countries in the various aspects of preparing and delivering examinations.

South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment

The South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA) is a regional organisation which serves the Pacific Island States in the area of educational assessment. It was established in 1980 to provide advice and assistance on educational assessment to member states. The Board's establishment came at a time when newly independent states in the region were confronted with rapid changes in education.

SPBEA is based in Suva, Fiji and has 12 members. The member states differ in terms of geography, race, culture, colonial history and education.

SPBEA's role in the region is both advisory and consultative. SPBEA guides its members in the development of assessment systems. Presently, over 8 national awards are offered in the different member states. Some of these are well established and need only intermittent servicing from the Board. Others depend more on SPBEA because of resource constraints.

SPBEA assist countries in several ways. A significant part of the assistance is in the form of training of nationals in different assessment techniques and skills. Each member state has an assessment/examination unit which works closely with the Secretariat of the Board. Most of the units are linked to SPBEA by modem. Such links are very important during examination processing periods. Some of the national awards which SPBEA has helped to establish are the Western Samoa School Certificate; the Kiribati National Certificate; the Tuvalu School Certificate, and, the Tonga School Certificate. The numbers enrolling in these examinations are relatively small in comparison with the numbers taking similar examinations in other parts of the world.

SPBEA also assists in the training of persons in some countries to set examination papers, process results and select students for secondary school places.

Another important aspect of SPBEA's work is the administration of the senior secondary examination - Pacific Senior Secondary Certificate (PSSC). This examination is equivalent to the British Advanced Level, and is taken by students in 6 countries.

SPBEA's work has concentrated largely on these assessment related areas. Firstly, it began training personnel in areas such as item writing, education statistics and examinations administrations well as encouraging the establishment of assessment units within national education systems. Secondly, in response to the removal of the widely used New Zealand University Entrance Examination, the Board set up a regional certificate with par equivalence - the Pacific Senior secondary Certificate (PSSC). Thirdly, it acted as a credible underwriter of national examinations.

(Trevor Rees and Gurmit Singh, 1996)

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The examination which started in 1989 replaced the New Zealand University Entrance Examination. Students who gain good grades in the PSSC examination are accepted into the Foundation Programme at the University of the South Pacific. Some students are given scholarships to study in similar programmes in New Zealand and Australia. However, the majority go to national institutions.

PSSC subjects have an internally assessed component which counts for 40% of the final total marks. To assist schools in designing internal assessment programmes that meet the conditions prescribed in the various syllabuses, SPBEA officers conduct workshops for teachers. All the internal assessment programmes are submitted to SPBEA for approval before implementation. SPBEA then conducts verification visits to check on the delivery of programmes. The PSSC has now been in existence for 7 years. During this time many improvements have taken place and the Board has responded well to the needs of its membership.

Botswana The representative of Botswana shared information on attempts of Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Swaziland to form a regional examination body. She explained that in 1970 a regional project that was externally funded was initiated to help build capacity in the four countries in measurement and assessment and to develop a Council. The concept of regional cooperation expanded to the establishment of a University. In 1971 the Committee of the University requested funding for strengthening the Examinations Council which it was hoped would enhance the quality of examinations provided by the participating countries, localise examinations, remove cultural bias and achieve economies of scale.

In 1978 the University ceased functioning and as a result the Council dissolved.

Since 1988 three of the countries started talks again about the possibility of cooperation in the preparation and provision of examinations. Presently Botswana is in the middle of a big expansion programme and has agreed in principle to regional cooperation but has made no financial commitment.

SECTION 5

TECHNICAL ISSUES

This plenary session dealt with ways of testing. Dr Desmond Broomes made a presentation on criterion - reference and competency - based testing which are being employed by many of the countries represented. Another method, modular-testing being employed by UCLES was presented by Mr John Sadler.

Dr Broomes presented the nature of and issues in criterion-referenced and competency based testing. Most countries are shifting from norm-referenced testing in order to provide examinations that enable the examiners to give more meaningful interpretation of the results. The criteria and competency based forms of testing are also more open and allows for common understanding and expectations among examiners, teachers and students. The shift is not always easy and parents and employers need to be informed of the way results are presented and how the information can be used.

Dr Broomes, explained approaches to criterion-referenced testing which were being employed by CXC in setting, marking, and grading its examinations. He noted that many examinations boards had shifted from norm-referenced testing in order to promote, among examiners, students, and teachers, clearer thinking about what candidates were expected to be able to do and, at the same time, to reduce the arbitrary selection of items and questions which formed the examination components. Each component was constructed to ensure, with high probability, that all candidates were awarded valid and meaningful grades. That is, grades that were pre-defined in terms of tasks set down by the examiners and best described what the candidates could do in a well-specified domain.

The way in which an examination syllabus was constructed and written up, adequately reflected the criterion - referenced procedures employed by CXC. The construction of a syllabus for a CXC examination, its annual review after every examination session, and its major revision within a 3-5 year cycle were undertaken by a panel of persons (practising secondary teachers, university lecturers, and curriculum developers) who, with the technical support of two CXC Assistant Registrars, (a) collected and analysed

It is recognised that the Seychelles National Examinations provide valuable feedback on the strengths/weaknesses of the cohort and hence the effectiveness of the teaching learning process. However, it is also recognised that the system does not provide detailed information for individual students. a student, teacher or parent will receive only an overall view of the student's attainment with no specific information as to that student's particular strengths/weaknesses within the subject. For this reason, other forms of assessment and such matters as student profiling and records of attainment are being considered and piloted. It is likely that National Examination systems will be developed such as to increase the detail of the output information on individual student performances.

(Seychelles Country Paper Barbados, 1996)

(a) collected and analysed the comments of teachers on all aspects of the syllabus and the related examination (b) reviewed and revised the syllabus by updating the content and making the syllabus more responsible to the needs of the students and the socio-economic development of the region.

The constructed syllabus described the content to be taught, the objectives to be achieved, and the rationale for including the specified content and objectives. Further, the content and the objectives of the syllabus were reclassified in terms of ***profile dimensions*** which identified the salient features of the subjects in ways useful for teaching and testing. Finally, the syllabus provided careful specifications for each examination component, giving the type of items (or questions), the number of items (or questions) and the format of items (or questions).

Dr Broomes described the assessment model of CXC as comprising two essential parts: ***external assessment*** and ***internal assessment***. Under external assessment, examiners used two main test methods - multiple choice items and essay questions. Essay questions were the short answer or highly structured or extended type. Under internal assessment, teachers in schools set and supervised and assessed certain assignments which were selected to meet criteria published by CXC. CXC applied moderation procedures to all internally assessed assignments in order to ensure that similar standards were maintained from school to school and from examination session to session. The principal approach to moderation was the re-making of a sample of assignments by a cadre of highly trained experienced examiners. However, the validity and the reliability of internal assessment was controlled, up front, through the use of stated criteria cooperatively determined for assessing the assignments and the regular orientation of teachers in the use of the criteria.

Briefly, these activities in syllabus construction, syllabus maintenance, item and question construction and banking, paper setting, marking and grading, and the use and analysis of information collected from candidates, teacher and examiners, were the principal procedures through which CXC sought to operationalise criterion-referenced testing.

Modular Testing

Mr John Sadler explained the modular testing which is being developed by UCLES. A module is defined as a free-standing unit of learning assessed separately during, or at the end of the teaching time allowed. One module represents approximately one-

The conduct of examinations include activities like the setting and moderation of question papers and mark schemes; the translation of question papers and mark schemes; the translation of question papers into Braille; the translation of scripts from Braille; the adapting of questions for sight impaired candidates; the marking and moderation of answer scripts; the control over markers and moderators; the moderation of course work and oral examinations; grading meetings; remarking of scripts on appeal; and, enumeration of invigilators and heads of centres.

(Namibia Country Paper

Barbados, 1996)

sixth of an A level course and equates to 45 hours teaching time plus additional private study. 6 modules equal 1 A level and 3 modules equal 1 Advanced supplementary.

The assessment of modules is mainly by written papers that are externally set and marked. The assessment is not provided every term for all modules; most are available twice a year.

The results are reported to candidates about 8 weeks after each module testing. A mark expressed as % and a module grade are given and a certificate is awarded for each module.

Candidates' module marks are converted into uniform marks.

The advanced supplementary and A level results are calculated by adding together uniform marks already reported and comparing them with a pre-published tariff. There are no "hurdles" and the results are reported at the same time as other A results.

Some of the concerns in a modular scheme are as follows:

- over assessment
- absence can be critical
- sequential learning
- timetabling can be complicated
- complex rules and regulations

Other considerations are

- extra burden for examination officers
- increase in possibility of errors in satisfying rules
- tight deadlines
- more administration contacts with candidates
- higher exam entry fees
- constant prospect for further change

Institutions are also concerned about the demotivation of staff, the timing of internal examinations, inter-departmental strife. Participants noted that this form of testing had great possibilities for providing students with greater choice and expressed the need to learn more about similar models being implemented in other parts of the Commonwealth.

National examinations particularly at the end of the ten-year Basic Education Programme, will continue to be necessary to assist in the process of selection and for placement of students into the next levels of formal education. A shift from the present wholly norm - referenced testing strategies to criterion - referenced testing will ensure that the examinations are closely linked to the aims and objectives of the curriculum. The examinations will be supplemented by a process of continuous assessment which will also use criterion - referenced testing devices.

**(Botswana Country Paper
Barbados, 1996)**

SECTION 6

SCHOOL-BASED ASSESSMENT

Most countries have some form of school-based assessment (SBA) which forms part of the terminal examinations. There was agreement on the value of SBA which allowed for the assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not easy to examine in traditional tests; inputs from teachers who are most knowledgeable of the abilities and competencies of students; and, opportunity for those students who are uncomfortable with examinations in a formal setting.

It was recognised, that SBA makes heavy demands on students and teachers. The students may have to do several assignments for different subjects. In some cases there is duplication in the skills being assessed. For example, some of the assignments in physics, chemistry and biology given to a students doing all three subjects, may be testing the same set of skills. This is a concern voiced by many teachers in the Caribbean region and CXC is addressing these concerns.

Teachers also spend a great deal of time marking assignments and preparing records for submission to the ministry of education or the examination body.

The moderation of the SBA is time consuming and costly. In some countries statistical moderation with some field visits is used. In others a systematic procedure for sampling and remarking has been established.

Teachers are helped in many cases in carrying out the SBA through the provision of guidelines and resource materials and training in workshops. Some examples of SBA are given below.

(i) CXC Examinations

- all subjects do not have SBA

School based assessment was one of the flags of innovation which CXC marched under in its formative years. It was a boast, frequently heard, that we were ahead of the English boards in implementing the idea. A pardonable exaggeration, no longer heard, as the Council staff has long had to concentrate on the administration of SBA moderation and the teachers have grown increasingly restless as the number of subjects requiring SBA have grown. The teachers claim to be burdened beyond tolerable limits by having to mark and record the SBA assignments.

(Professor R Augier, Chairman of CXC Barbados, 1996)

-candidates with the assistance of their teacher select topics for SBA according to guidelines set by CXC
-SBA is moderated through the marking of samples from each school by markers appointed by CXC.

-SBA accounts for 20-30 percent of the total marks at General Proficiency level and 40 percent at the technical proficiency level.

(ii) SPBEA Examinations

-All subjects do not have SBA

-The criteria for SBA are defined by the Board

(iii) Jamaica- National Assessment Programme (Primary grades).

-The focus is on improving assessment procedures in each school. A senior teacher is trained to assist the principal with assessment tasks within the school

-SBA for some subjects accounts for as much as 40% of the total marks

-Statistical moderation is employed

(iv) UCLES Examinations

-All subjects in GCSE have SBA

-Teachers are trained before being assigned to conduct SBA

-The time on the syllabus allocated to SBA determines the percentage of total marks for the SBA. The percentage varies from 20 percent in some subjects to 100% in Art.

-The number of hours spent by teachers on SBA forms part of the number of contact hours for which teachers are contracted and to help other teachers develop the skills required.

-Teachers are encouraged to try out different assessment techniques.

In small assessment systems, as in large ones, there is a desire to maximise fairness and to give due weight and recognition to course work. However, the assessment of course work has posed a number of difficulties. It is subject to perceptions of bias, especially in systems where family and community loyalties are fierce and there is an expectation that one must assist one's relatives, fellow villagers or fellow language - speakers. It is administratively difficult. It is consuming of teacher's time. It is difficult to ensure equity on a national scale. And it can be inordinately expensive. But it has great face validity - it directly rewards students for work done in the real world, rather than under artificial examination constraints.

(SPBEA Paper Barbados, 1996)

SECTION 7

SECURITY ISSUES

Security is an important consideration in the administration of examinations. It is even more critical in small states where the administration of examinations may be located in a department or as part of a Division in the Ministry of Education and the officers responsible have different functions; the pool of persons to assist in examinations is small; everybody knows who is responsible for what; and, access by parents and the public to education officials is easy.

Security is a concern at all stages in the preparation of examinations: setting; printing; marking; analysing; and using technology.

The workshop was informed of several measures taken to ensure security. These included the following:

-contracting an overseas company to print papers;

-asking examiners to sign a statement to the effect that no one close to the examiner is writing the examinations;

-supervising the marking;

-asking a student selected at random to report on examination procedures by completing a questionnaire;

-insuring examination papers in case of a breach and new papers must be set;

-marking papers under supervision;

-using special mail arrangements or sending an officer with papers to districts and other islands taking the examinations;

-asking an international examination body to take responsibility for some of the stages;

The workshop benefited from presentations/demonstrations by representatives of three UK Companies. Participants were informed of the work being done and how these companies deal with security issues in particular. A summary of the presentations is given below.

Retired teachers and ministers of religion in good health, are given the responsibility for proctoring the examinaitons. Each year the staff is oriented in the methods of administering examinations. They are instructed about confidentiality and ensuring the security of papers and scripts, as well as the conduct of the examinations, following the prescribed regulations as outlined in the manuals of the examining boards. They are recruited based on honesty, trust and capability.

(St Kitts and Nevis Country Paper Barbados, 1996)

Stephen Austin and Sons Limited

Mr Bill Jordan explained the processes involved in the printing of examination papers.

By the time printing of question papers takes place, it is already a very long way along the chain of getting a question paper. Some of the preliminary steps are:

-preparing and distributing syllabuses to schools

-teaching the new syllabuses for about two years to prepare students for the examinations

-setting and approving examination papers by examination body

-preparing a manuscript for the printers

In making a decision to print papers locally, examination bodies should consider the issues outlined below:

(i) Security

It is easy to choose the correct equipment, but careful consideration is necessary in selecting the staff who can be trusted with the confidential documents. People who are involved in preparing the question papers must be trustworthy. Also, the location where papers are prepared and kept should be secure.

(ii) Copy preparation

Once setting is ready, it is necessary to ensure that it is from a copy that was properly edited and details like the correct dates have been checked since it is costly to make corrections after printing.

(iii) Batch production

It is more economical to produce papers in batches. This controls costs, security and the finished product.

(iv) Printing/Finishing

It is more economical and less prone to errors to have as few loose inserts as possible. Perhaps the only loose item being the Optional Machine Reading (OMR) Form for multiple choice papers. It is also necessary to assess the number of packs required and not have too many variations.

(v) Paper

The exam paper has a paper life of about two hours. This should be taken into consideration in selecting the-paper and keeping costs down.

It is recognised that proper security arrangements are essential if the integrity of examinations is to be maintained. Persons to be involved in examination work, either in the setting of tests, or as practical examiners, or as supervisors and invigilators are carefully chosen, and are generally briefed on the need for confidentiality. If they have close relatives writing the respective examination, they are not permitted to work for that examination.

(Guyana Country Paper,Barbados, 1996)

(vi) Quantities

The quantities required should be calculated as accurately as possible. This is not always easy especially if the printing is being done long before the number of candidates is known. It is easy to overprint but security then becomes a concern when there are many "live" papers available before the examination.

(vii) Computer indents

These are far more accurate and easier to control.

(viii) Delivery

In setting up a schedule it is necessary to work backwards so that papers are printed on time but not too long before for security reasons. To avoid problems at the last and critical stages it is imperative to have fully trained staff available and well maintained equipment.

In the actual delivery of the papers, Stephen Austin and Sons (SAS) Ltd always accompany consignments to airports an docks.

(ix) Waste Copies/Sheets

At the place of printing, arrangements should be made for disposal of waste copies since these are a security risk. SAS sheds all waste copies.

Hamlet Computer Group Ltd

Family of Applications for Informations Management (FAIM)

Mr Chris Everett, Hamlet Computer Group Limited informed participants of the work of his Company. Since the late eighties, the Company has specialised in providing a range of products, in the form of specialist applications software, and a range of consultancy services, in the form of advice on computer strategy.

Security and confidentiality measures:

(a) The printing of the question papers is done abroad.

(b) The officers and teachers involved in conducting examination activities especially in setting and moderating question papers have to sign an enactment.

(c) The question papers are opened in front of the candidates and one or two candidates are asked to signed a document as the witness.

(d) Identifications of the candidates on the answer scripts are covered.

(e) The packets of question papers are distributed only on the day of the examination.

(f) The appointment of teachers to set and moderate examinations is done without the Principal's knowledge.

(Brunei Darussalam Country Paper Barbados, 1996)

implementation, project management and added value service.

These skills represent a package of technology products provided under the general title of FAIM - Family of Applications for Information Management. They are of major benefit to any organisation administering examinations whether at School, Higher Education, University, Board and Ministry Level; whether they are at Primary, Secondary or Tertiary Level, whether academic, vocational or professional; and, whether the whole package is required or simply modules of it.

During the last seven years, the system has been expanded to meet the requirements of a wide range of organisations using Hamlet's services to support the administration of their Education and Training requirements.

It is fair to say that virtually all organisations administering students, training and examinations management should be considered potential users of FAIM.

A summary of the applications for FAIM is as follows:

-Examinations Boards and/or government departments who offer accreditation to candidates in a wide range of syllabuses.

-Employers needing to manage the training of staff and/or the award and tracking of associated qualifications.

-Awarding bodies or accredited centres administering NVQ's or GNVQ's.

-Educational establishments such as Schools, Universities and Colleges with teachers and students who respectively provide and take tuition in the form of lectures, courses or seminars.
-Membership organisations who will provide professional development schemes, courses and seminars, events and examinations.

FAIM

The Product FAIM is now a single generic, modular product which effectively condenses the five market sectors illustrated into a single market. It has been designed to provide a business-led approach to delivering the Education and Training initiatives taken by Governments. Since it embraces academic and vocational assessment it can provide a bedrock for all faced with the task of administering examinations.

FAIM now contains a library of applications which will be added to and expanded as new user requirements materialise. The library utilises the same core database throughout, thus enabling maintenance costs to be kept down and providing new versions of the software to all users from time to time.

The degree of flexibility provided for users and availability of source code at modular level will give users powerful aids to help them modify FAIM themselves without endangering the support we can supply.

In summary, FAIM is now a world force in supplying solutions to every user of Information Technology in the Education and Training market worldwide.

The key behind FAIMS's ability to meet the different needs of clients is a truly generic and flexible database. Three key data elements have been identified to meet

requirements for the management of training and examinations.

These are: **PEOPLE, LOCATIONS** and **ACTIVITIES**

These key elements are then linked by the concept of ROLES and FACILITIES.

A simple example of this would be an individual with several roles (student, teacher and examiner) who still remain as a single entry in the database. Likewise a location can provide a whole series of facilities (classroom, exam centre, meeting room or accommodation) linked to the activities managed by the enterprise.

Data & Research Services plc

Mr John Gomersall of Data Research Services plc (DRS) provided information on Optical Mark Reader (OMR). He explained that processes in the examination cycle which inevitably create "bottlenecks" in the flow of the system are:

-the Registration of Students

-the Marking of examination answer papers

-the Collating of students test results with their personal details.

Optical Mark Reader technology can provide a most cost effective aid in the solution of these problems.

For example, at the crucial time between the sitting of the examinations and the results, the speed at which the marking can be done, and data captured will determine to a large extent the perceived success of the exercise.

Multiple Choice Answer sheets can be scanned accurately at high speed, the data validated, and compared to correct answers. Result lists, and associated statistics, are immediately available.

The results thus obtained can be used to automatically update the student records if required.

The Student Registration Forms and Examiner Mark Sheets offer other potential opportunities for data capture by OMR in the examination process.

The increased practicality of the on-site customisation of answer, and mark sheets with barcodes, which can be conveniently read by some OMR systems, can significantly reduce the requirement for form filling by students, and thus reduce the frequency of errors.

In summary the benefits of OMR Data Capture:

Speed: time scales for data capture dramatically reduced by scanning at 5,000 plus sheets per hour. Potential to ask more questions!

Accuracy: the validation capabilities available in the systems offer the potential for absolute accuracy, 24 hours a day.

Security: correct answers available only to key people, not to many markers. Answer sheets, which can be anonymous, not handled individually, but as a batch to the OMR machine.

Analysis: once the data is captured and stored on the system, it is available for manipulation and analysis as required.

Economy: valuable, skilled resources can be released from MCQ marking for more productive tasks, such as teaching and assessment of non-objective scripts.

SECTION 8

RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS

This topic was handled in a panel discussion. Members of the panel were representatives of Ministry of Education, Barbados, CXC, NZQA and UCLES. Each member made a short presentation on how the respective examination body deals with the recognition of qualifications.

Barbados

Two considerations in the recognition of qualifications are:-

(i) the expansion of qualifications based on academic needs to include qualifications necessary for the industrial, manufacturing and technological sectors;

(ii) the high amount of repatriation compared with migration and the need to assess qualifications of returning citizens to enable them to gain employment.

In 1972 the Cabinet agreed to the appointment of an Equivalency Committee that includes representatives of:

-The Teachers' Union or Association
-The University of the West Indies
-The Ministry of Education

The Committee can co-opt other members depending on the particular tasks.

The process used in determining equivalencies for secondary level qualifications is as follows:

Compare syllabi with CXC syllabi;

Check official transcripts of examination that was taken (for example, open or closed). Ascertain type of studies done (for example, fulltime/part time/correspondence/combination of distance and face to face education;

The Bahamas General Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE) attempts to ensure that the assessment procedures for school leavers reflect relevance to the Bahamian situation while simultaneously maintaining standards which are credible and have currency within and outside the country. From an internal perspective, these standards are no less exacting than those of the overseas examinations which have been respected and relied upon over the past sixty years. However, it is recognised that credibility is not exclusively an internal and domestic matter. During this transitional period, therefore, accreditation of the examination has been provided by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate.

**(Bahamas Country Paper
Barbados, 1996)**

Determine number of contact hours for each course/subject

Verify status of institution

Determine entry requirements for and duration and content of course.

Some of the concerns of the Ministry of Education are as follows:

(i) there is an increase in the number of institutions and the type of certificates persons receive and some of the certificates/diplomas do not give enough information to determine proficiency;

(ii) there is need for a data base on institutions, programmes and certification (the Association of Caribbean Tertiary Institutions is working on the establishment of such a data base).

CXC

The CXC representative informed the workshop that since the Council had departed radically from accepted practices it had to do a great deal of work to inform the public, parents and teachers about the type and value of CXC certificates. Moderators from the UK assisted CXC and endorsed the equivalence of a grade C awarded by UCLES to the boundary of CXC grades 2 and 3. Recognition by international institutions required negotiation with various matriculation Boards. The World University Services confirmed worth of the certification, therefore enabling entry into the United States of America. There was also negotiation with the private sector and agreement with governments about qualifications for entry into the world of work and the public service.

NZQA

In New Zealand the Qualification Evaluation Service provides a service to persons who want qualifications assessed to enable them to enter institutions for further education or to seek employment.

UCLES

For several reasons - political and economic - countries that once took the UCLES examinations and those provided by other international bodies now wish to run their own examinations.

Often in the initial stage, as in the case of CXC, there is a certain mistrust of the standards and a concern for international recognition. UCLES as an internationally recognised body serves as an accrediting body for some countries under conditions listed below. A contract is agreed for accreditation whereby UCLES makes a public statement as to the standards of a scheme of assessment administered by an independent body.

Under this agreement the Ministry/Examination Council is asked to ensure that:

-appropriate arrangements are made for the proper administration, and security of the examination and that documentation relating to these matters is supplied to UCLES;

-suitable chief Examiners, Team Leaders and Assistant Examiners are appointed;

-question paper moderation meetings are properly conducted;

-draft question papers are in a suitable state (that is, are typed and include rubrics, instruction, diagrams and draft marking schemes) before their despatch to UCLES;

-draft question papers are received at least X months prior to the examination;

-the final versions of the question papers and marking schemes have taken due account of comments from UCLES;

-correct final versions of the question papers are printed and are supplied to UCLES at least X months prior to the examinations, together with the detailed marking schemes;

-marking schemes are available to examiners;

-coordination meetings are properly conducted;

-appropriate arrangements have been made for the grading and grade review meetings, including provision of statistics and other supporting materials;

-suitable subject experts and examiners attend the grading and grade review meetings;

-examiners reports are produced;

-suitable arrangements made for the review and revision (where appropriate) of syllabuses and associated assessment schemes;

-drafts of new and revised syllabuses are submitted to UCLES at least Z years prior to the first examination of those syllabuses.

UCLES in turn will ensure that:

-draft question papers and detailed marking schemes are moderated and comments sent to the Ministry/Examinations Council within Y months of their receipt;

-pre-examination recommendations for selected grade boundaries are made to the Ministry/Examination Council on the basis of detailed marking schemes;

-revised or new syllabuses are inspected by subject experts, commented upon and approved, rejected or amended as appropriate;

-advice is given on course work matters where appropriate.

Further during fields visits the UCLES representatives ensure that;

-procedures for coordination and standardisation of marking have taken place;

-there are secure arrangements for the storage of question papers and other examination materials;

-regulations for the conduct of the examination have been made clear to centres and candidates;

-appropriate administrative examination processes have been carried out accurately.

Examples of 4 Types of Accreditation were provided.

Type 1

The Ministry/Examinations Council uses UCLES syllabus, question paper and marking scheme but marks the papers and UCLES supervises the grading.

Type 2

The Ministry/Examinations Council uses UCLES syllabuses but prepare their own question papers and marking schemes and

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question papers and marking schemes and marks the papers. UCLES supervises the grading.

Type 3

The Ministry/Examinations Council uses its own syllabuses, question papers and marking schemes and marks the papers. UCLES supervises the grading.

Type 4

The Ministry/Examinations Council uses its own syllabuses, question papers, marking schemes, marks scripts and grades candidates. UCLES checks on process and procedures.

SECTION 9

DEVELOPING A CREDIT SYSTEM

Ms Edna Tait, Director of the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States presented a case study of the establishment of a credit system in a school in New Zealand. In order to place the programme in context, a background giving an outline of the education system, the school within the education system, the philosophical underpinnings of the programme and some assumptions made is provided below.

Background

All New Zealand schools are self-managing and led by elected Boards of Trustees who, within prescribed boundaries, are responsible for meeting the learning needs of students. The Ministry of Education provides the Curriculum Framework which outlines seven key learning areas to be covered and which allows for freedom of choice within and beyond the Framework. The Education Review Office checks schools from time to time to ensure that they are meeting relevant legislation (for example, for safety, privacy and reporting) and that they are meeting their self-identified goals for students' learning. The Qualifications Authority provides senior national examinations and accredits schools for the National Certificate units of learning. In the Government's policy of a seamless education, from pre-school to tertiary, formal school learning is no longer confined to the secondary school but may also occur concurrently in other places such as local work places and tertiary institutions.

The school in this case study is the Tikipunga High School. The student body comprises an equal number of boys and girls and of Maori and non Maori children. The community is relatively poor and is unable to contribute to the school in the way that other communities do in other parts of the country. Since the early 1980s there was concern that few senior students were passing external examinations, too many were leaving school with no credentials; and, many were unable to find employment in the city where work opportunities were few and required evidence of skills. Staff, parents, trustees and interested community members discussed ways to improve the situation. What emerged was the start of a practice of critical reflection on all aspects of school life. The theoretical basis for the examination of school practices drew on

Two of our social practices puzzle me. First, in many examination systems we spend a great deal of money to fail students and, second, having failed the students we then wonder why they are unemployed. The problem seems to be that policy-makers, employers, educational institutions, even families do not acknowledge that any learning has occurred if the examination pass mark is not reached.

Edna Tait, 1996

work that emphasised the interconnection of every aspect of school assumptions, policies and procedures. The results of the practice of critical reflection throughout he following years included changes in policies and procedures making them very different in some cases from those of other schools and a culture of change. The institutionalisation of a credit or modular system was one of the innovative changes and it influenced other changes in the school.

The philosophical underpinnings of the credit system included the following:

(a) schools make a positive difference to students' lives and ideals for schools are desirable;

(b) all students have the right to the best schooling (the goal is equity and not equality in learning opportunities);

(c) all students have the right to learning which will enable them to share resources and responsibilities of adult living;

(d) family, ethnicity, class, gender, age, (dis)ability all influence school achievement (school culture gaps are ignored and the advantages and disadvantages of students' family economic and social status need particular attention.

It was also assumed that:

(i) Examinations are necessary but
-they have major negative effects on too many students' lives

-they carry status beyond their worth

-they are powerful determinants of 'worthwhile' learning at all levels of the school

-they validate certain ways of 'worthwhile' school work (pen and paper, restricted time, no cooperation, no checking)

-they frequently are a test of teachers (content covered and how well, guessing the questions to be answered) rather than students

-they appear to be economic and political instruments of social management (presented as the results of schooling but acting as the controls of choices for adult life).

(ii) Prior learning and learning achieved can both be recognised in a credit system.

(iii) Learning in age group is illogical and a denial of students' varied abilities.

(iv) Celebration of achievement- small or large- is important.

(v) Teachers are responsible for their teaching, students are responsible for their learning.

In essence, the credit system is a way of delivering the curriculum in units (or modules as I shall call them) so that the emphasis moves from teaching to learning and the learning achieved is described in writing at the end of each module.

Edna Tait, 1996

The Credit System Framework

The development of the Credit System took two years and it is still being refined six years later. The development was not an easy process and not all teachers are using it fully. But it is working well.

Features of the modules

1 Nearly all teaching areas are organised into ten-week modules of four hours per week (that is, each module has 40 hours). A few modules are split into two 20 hours and a few are doubled.

2 All modules are described in a Modular Studies Book, available at the end of each year, from which students select their learning for the following year, with guidance from staff and family.

3 Each module is described in the same way for ease of understanding giving

-a name indicating the focus of the module

-a number indicating the level of difficulty

-entry prerequisite

-desired learning outcomes

-content of the teaching

-kinds of assessment to be used/offered with the module (many senior modules may offer both achievement assessment and national awards).

4 Modules are grouped in the book (English, Science etc) and are introduced with a flow chart which summarises the paths which can be followed in that group of modules.

5 Where possible module choices in any grouping include, up to senior school at least, the core or required modules, catch-up and challenge modules.

6 Modules can be credited to a student's record if he/she demonstrates the required learning; modules can also be repeated to gain higher results; modules of an advanced level can be taken if the prerequisites are met or the Head of Department approves.

7 The school's assessment is integrated into the teaching process; assessment varies according to the module and operates often in both formative and summative roles; students may use the results to repeat the task to gain higher achievements. In theory, every student could gain top assessment for every objective but students' energy, ability and the ten week time frame work against this.

Assessment

- Uses a 1-5 scale

- occurs through the module when the student is ready

- has clearly and pre-identified ways for students to achieve.

In simplistic form, assessment follows the pattern of:

Aim: To _____ _____

Learning Objectives	Assessment Statement
1. →	
2. →	
3. →	

Assessment Tasks and Criteria

1. →	1-5
2. →	1-5
3. →	1-5

The Modular System (Process)

Students select (with guidance) six modules for each of the four semesters of the coming year in October.

Students choices are timetabled as far as is possible.

Adjustments are made in January to cater for students changing choices.

School begins in February. At the start of each new module students are given the details of the module, in particular the assessment tasks and criteria for the assessment of the two or three objectives of that module and any time limits.

At the end of each module the teachers report each student's level of learning for each objective, by numbers. The school's computerized process converts the numbers into pre-written assessment statements.

Students receive their booklet of statements two weeks after the end of a semester.

Features of the Credit System

Students are enabled to take charge of their learning; they help each other; they learn to manage time; they learn to self-assess; they learn to establish priorities.

Short term learning goals are more effective than year long goals.

Varied processes are possible to reach learning goals.

Assessment style matches the desired learning outcomes (not just paper and pen examinations).

Learning is at the ability level not age level (Modular studies quickly produced multi-level learning in the school).

Process as well as product is a feature of classrooms.

Mistakes are acceptable ways of learning, students can 'try out' modules, 'try out' ways of achieving.

External examinations are optional.

Students' requests for learning not initially offered by the school can be added to the curriculum.

Modules can run outside of the timetable with minimal teacher presence because students are self-directing.

Students receive ongoing and quick feedback on progress.

Because of its flexibility, staff usage is more efficient.

Special needs are integrated as modules and not tacked on as second class courses.

Modules enable adults and students with disabilities to select special programmes; students are also able to reduce their number of school modules and take courses outside the school (e.g. workplace, polytechnic).

Students entering external examinations can be given preparation modules to help them succeed.

Gaps and overlaps in the school curriculum are more easily identified and resolved.

The traditional hierarchy of school subjects with distant goals, abstract content and concepts and (in senior school) anonymous external assessors is replaced by a delivery and assessment system more appropriate for students hurt by home/class - school culture gaps. In addition, it also benefits all learners.

Benefits of the Modular System

More students stayed at school.

More students achieved in a variety of areas of learning.

More students entered and gained success in national and overseas awards.

More students explored new areas of learning.

All students leave the school with, at least, a number of statements of their knowledge and skills.

Employers welcome the assessments and praise students from the school for their mature approach to work and their self-discipline.

Less motivated or less energetic teachers are re-energized by the system, either by their own efforts or by their students.

Challenges in Modular Studies System

Student selection of modules must be carried out with full academic and vocational guidance.

Teachers need training to learn how to write and assess in the modular system.

Timetabling is complex.

Identification and resolution of gaps and overlaps in the curriculum are important for the best use of the student's day but could be a sensitive staff issue.

All the work described to bring about the modular system had to be done within the

school's limited resources, not always easy.

The initial work by staff was onerous but did become easier.

Computer programmes are very helpful (if they can be afforded) for printing the Modular book, for reproducing assessment statements and for keeping records of students' results.

More office time was needed to relieve teaching staff of the administrative work for modules. A simpler process however, is possible.

Students transferring to other schools need an explanatory note of the system to take with their assessment sheets.

Two specific problems faced: schools came to visit the systen and them in spite of our advice, misapplied what we were doing, and, at first the language of our assessments was too abstract to be of any use.

A Modular System in Comparison with External Examinations Issues

International recognition: the majority of students need described learning to win paid employment locally. The students able and wanting to attend polytechnic, university do so and gain their 'recognized' awards. No school should be organised to meet the needs of the second group only.

Confidentiality: in examinations this may matter but at the school we noted that some students do not achieve-top results even open book tests, or take -home tasks or tests with the questions given well before hand.

Reliability of results: the modular system is no worse than examinations and has the merit of matching process with desired product. It can use assessment styles appropriate to the learner, and the volume of results also enables patterns of achievement to emerge.

Relativity of Results: there is a careful development of modules and their assessments within a family of learning, for example, English. No attempt is made to make results in one subject area relative to results in another area in a mechanical or numerical manner. Heads of Departments (HoD) are senior staff experienced in assessment. In cooperation with their own teachers and other HODs, they manage their own subject's assessment. For many modules, relativity is determined by the prerequisites for entry, or by the stand alone nature of desired learning outcomes.

Maintenance of standards: through all modules and over the years, the assessment task criteria provide clear standards. The students themselves are also very careful of their own and other students' standards of achievement.

Students/Teachers are over-assessed in a Modular System: at first this was true. With experience staff have learned to reduce the number of learning objectives and assessment tasks to key indicators of learning.

SECTION 10

CONCLUSION

Recommendations

The recommendations of the workshop are as follows:

(i) preparation of publication of papers presented and deliberations of the workshop;

(ii) preparation of publication of case studies of area such as legal framework for national and regional examination systems; types of testing, school-based assessment and, costs of administering examinations;

(iii) establishment of an Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Boards, details of which are given in Appendix IV);

(iv) preparation of a code of practice for Commonwealth countries;

(v) preparation of a directory of Examination Boards;

(vi) sharing of information through links with international agencies such as IAEA and UNESCO;

(vii) attachments for persons to learn about aspects of examination systems, for example, the use of information technology;

(viii) training of persons in assessment;

(ix) review of national examination systems;

(x) follow-up workshop to deal with specific issues such as modular testing.

EVALUATION OF THE WORKSHOP

Participants were asked to evaluate elements of the workshop on a rating scale and by writing comments. Overall, the participants considered the workshop to be well organised, informative and relevant to their needs.

A summary of the evaluation under the different headings is given below.

Organisation

Participants gave a high rating for travel arrangements, meals and hospitality.

Structure of the workshop

Participants gave high ratings for the mix of plenary and group discussions, the interaction in group sessions and outside workshop sessions and the content of the displays and demonstrations.

The participants reported that there was insufficient time for discussion in the plenary sessions after the presentations by panel members.

Content

Participants gave high ratings for the relevance of the content for their work and their country needs.The Newsletter got a very high rating, and the visit to schools was highly appreciated.

They reported that they gained new information and that the content was pitched at an appropriate level. They wished for more time to discuss topics and present country papers.

The sessions from which they benefited most were those on school-based assessment, modes of testing, security and recognition of qualifications. They reported on insufficient attention given to economies of scale.

Although, some of the participants are not involved in regional examinations and in credit systems, these two sessions also got high ratings for content and presentation.

Participants expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for convening the workshop, to the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, and CXC for hosting it in Barbados and to the several sponsors for their support.

APPENDIX 1

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APPENDIX II

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8 Stephen Austin and Sons Ltd
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9 UNESCO, Apia
Western Samoa

10 UNICEF
Bhutan

APPENDIX III

PROGRAMME

Opening Ceremony (6 May 1996) - 0900 - 1000

National Anthem

Prayers	-	Mr Donald Padmore Education Officer, Ministry of Education Youth Affairs & Culture Barbados
Chairperson	-	Miss Lolita Applewhaite Permanent Secretary Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & culture
Welcome	-	Mr Ralph Boyce Chief Education Officer
Remarks	-	Ms Irene Walter Registrar Caribbean Examinations Council
Remarks	-	Professor Stephen Matlin Director Human Resource Development Division Commonwealth Secretariat
Address	-	The Honourable Mia Amor Motley M.P. Minister of Education Youth Affairs & Culture
Closing Remarks	-	Miss Lolita Applewhaite Chairperson

Day 1 (6 May 1996)

1000 - 1030	-	B R E A K

1030 - 1130	-	Introduction and Conceptual Framework
1130 - 1300	-	Country presentations in three groups
1300 - 1430	-	L U N C H
1430 - 1530	-	Group reports and discussion
1530 - 1600	-	B R E A K
1600 - 1730	-	(Small group discussion continue) Plenary group discussions

Day 2 (7 May 1996)

0900 - 1230	-	Regional Examinations Systems for economies of scale Panel discussion - CXC, SPBEA, WAEC
1230 - 1330	-	L U N C H
1330 - 1530	-	Visits to Schools

Day 3 (8 May 1996)

0830 - 1000	-	Technical Issues - Ways of Testing Criterion - referenced, competency based, modular testing Panel discussion - CXC, SPBEA, WAEC, Cambridge
1000 - 1030	-	B R E A K
1030 - 1230	-	School based assessment Reporting results
1230 - 14000	-	L U N C H
1400 - 1500	-	security issues at different states CXC -setting, preparing, printing, marking, analysing, using technology, school arrangements (Panel discussion)
1500	-	Visits to CXC

Day 4 (9 May 1996)

0830 - 1030	-	Recognition of qualifications Panel Discussion - CXC, Cambridge, NZQA, Barbados
1030 - 1100	-	B R E A K

1100 - 1230	-	Developing a credit system
1230 - 1400	-	L U N C H
1400 - 1700	-	Group work - identifying needs, developing an action plan

Day 5 (10 May 1996)

0830 - 1130	-	Summary of proceedings Group work on recommendations Proposed follow-up activities
1130 - 1200	-	Closing Ceremony
1200 - 1330	-	L U N C H
1330	-	Tour of Island

APPENDIX IV

Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies
ACEAB

Membership:

National Bodies
Regional Bodies
Metropolitan Bodies

Affiliate Members:

Organisations producing and operating material and systems used in examinations and accreditation

Aims:

To provide a forum for exchanges of information and views on examinations and accreditation between member countries through such mechanisms as newsletter, networking arrangements and meetings;

To promote ethical standards in systems of examinations and accreditation;

To promote the training and professional development of personnel working in examinations and accreditation;

To promote the highest possible standards in examination processes and accreditation in member countries;

To facilitate the movement of students at all levels between Commonwealth countries by encouraging the development of a Commonwealth Standard for certification;

To promote research in assessment and examination procedures in order to encourage excellent practice in Commonwealth countries;

To encourage the development of software systems that can be used in processing examinations across Commonwealth countries, in order to enhance compatibility between systems and to enable small states to make use of systems that they would not have the individual capability to develop.

APPENDIX V

WORKSHOP ON EXAMINATION SYSTEMS IN SMALL STATES
CARIBBEE HOTEL, BARBADOS
6-10 MAY 1996

Evaluation of Workshop

Please give a rating on scale of 5 (excellent) to 1 (poor) and your comments on various elements of the workshop listed below.

1 **Organisation**

Travel arrangements	5	4	3	2	1
Hotel Accommodation	5	4	3	2	1
Meals	5	4	3	2	1
Hospitality	5	4	3	2	1

Please comment on the overall organization indicating what worked well and what could be improved.

---

2 **Structure of Workshop**

Mix of plenary and group sessions	5	4	3	2	1
Discussion time in plenary	5	4	3	2	1
Discussion time in group	5	4	3	2	1
Panel discussions	5	4	3	2	1
Time to interact with colleagues outside workshop sessions	5	4	3	2	1

Time to view displays etc	5	4	3	2	1
Rating of displays/demonstration	5	4	3	2	1
Rating of visits	5	4	3	2	1
Newsletter	5	4	3	2	1

Please comment on the structure of the workshop - strengths and weaknesses

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3 **Content**

Relevance to your country needs	5	4	3	2	1
Relevance to your own work	5	4	3	2	1
Presentation of new information	5	4	3	2	1
Presentation pitched at appropriate level	5	4	3	2	1

Please comment on the content stating which sessions were of particular relevance to you

---

---

4 **Comment on the session from which you benefited the most.**

---

5 **Comment on the session which was of least importance to you.**

---

6 **How well were each of the following issues handled?**

Economies of scale	5	4	3	2	1	
Security	5	4	3	2	1	
Modes of testing	5	4	3	2	1	
Regional examinations		5	4	3	2	1
School-based assessment	5	4	3	2	1	
Recognition of qualifications	5	4	3	2	1	
Developing a credit system	5	4	3	2	1	

7 **Give your suggestions for improving a workshop such as this one.**

---

8 **Give an overall assessment of workshop and comment on any new insights gained and whether or not the workshop was a worthwhile experience.**